

FACT SHEET

TREE MANAGEMENT IN TEXAS COMMUNITIES

Michael J. Walterscheidt*

With commitment to support and fund tree care by the residents, a community forestry program can be developed in most cities and towns in Texas. Tree management is important community property. Properly cared for trees are valuable assets to a community.

Several large cities in Texas are developing tree-care programs. However, smaller communities also need to develop a systematic management program. This publication describes the initial steps for establishing a tree management program and identifies the sources available for assistance.

Why Should Your Community Be Concerned?

Trees improve air quality by filtering dust and other polluting particles in the air.

Trees dramatically lower energy demands for residential heating and cooling.

Trees enhance the community's landscape. A community rich in trees and green spaces produces a healthier business and residential climate.

Trees create wealth; they have an actual dollar value that is recognized by real estate experts, landscape professionals, arborists, tree experts, foresters and tree nurserymen. Homes along tree-lined streets



Tree-lined streets such as this would be an asset to any community.

*Extension forestry specialist, The Texas A&M University System.

usually have a higher value than homes along streets without trees. Trees are an investment to protect. (For more information on the value of trees see Extension publication L-1683.)

Trees that are well cared-for seldom cause property damage from falling branches or uprooting. Good tree maintenance programs reduce risk of damage claims; therefore, the cost of a good tree maintenance program may be much less than a single damage or liability suit against the community.

Well-managed trees are better able to withstand costly ice and storm damage (as was shown during the January 1979 ice storm in north Texas), as well as insect, disease and "people" damage. This reduces the need for emergency tree work and citizen complaints about trees.

The cost of removing a dead tree and planting a new one greatly exceeds the cost of proper maintenance to keep a tree healthy.

Well-placed and well-maintained trees reduce or eliminate the risk of interference with street lights, utility wires, sidewalks, sewers, clear vision areas and private or public structures.

Does Your Community Have A Program?

Your community may already have a management plan or policy for taking care of trees. There may be a tree ordinance which controls street tree planting and other tree management activities. Or a particular community department, official or commission may be responsible for public tree management.

Many times civic clubs, garden clubs or service organizations in your community have begun tree planting projects which eventually fall by the wayside.

You may find residents who can remember past plans for tree planting and beautification. These earlier plans may be useful in laying the groundwork for a new and improved tree management program.

If your community has a tree management program, is it *effective* and *economical*? Do you know what it should be accomplishing? Is it time to re-evaluate your program?

What Is The Cost?

Cities rely most heavily on local funding for tree care programs with limited funding from other sources. The most frequent source of local funding is the general property tax.

Manpower through the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) is available for tree management activities. Many cities make use of this program.

Other federal grants often are available on a 50-50 basis to use for various aspects of tree care programs. Most of the federal grants allow for initial purchase and care but do not provide for long-term maintenance.

For additional information on sources of tree management and other grant funds, contact your community grantsman, your county or regional planning department or the technical assistance sources listed in this publication.

What Should Be Included?

A good tree management plan will allow a community to do a better job of

- tree management education and training
- tree selection and planting
- tree trimming and protection
- tree and stump removal
- tree and wood residue utilization
- tree management planning and budgeting

Here are some steps to help you start a good tree management program.

Prepare a tree management and control ordinance. This provides the legal basis for community tree management activities by assigning responsibility for the tree program to a community administrator, department, board or tree commission.

There are many benefits to a tree ordinance. For example, tree species planted on public property can be selective. Undesirable trees can be prohibited and controls established for "planting the right tree in the right place." A reasonable and enforceable ordinance should be the first step in developing a long-range tree management program.

Conduct a tree inventory to gather data about tree species, locations, conditions, maintenance and removal needs and areas needing planting. This will give you information for more effective work-planning and budgeting.

Prepare a tree management plan based upon the inventory data and other information. Specify objectives, needs and priorities in the areas of tree removal, maintenance, planting, etc. Available funds then can be directed more effectively toward the greatest needs. An updated plan will continue to be an effective tool for determining expenditures and work priorities.

A tree management plan should also include objectives for publicity and promotion in the community. For example, Arbor Week activities could be recommended and "Trees for People" themes developed.

Prepare tree work standards and specifications for tree management work to be done in the community. Good standards and specifications are the basis for consistent and high-quality tree management. This will be important whether you use tree service contractors or your own personnel.

At the same time, employees should be trained to recognize both good and bad tree maintenance practices. This will allow them to develop and understand tree work standards and specifications and to check tree work performance.

Develop a tree management library for your community offices. Reference books and bulletins are available from a variety of sources.

Make a special effort to have community trees inspected during the spring and summer to detect insects, disease or other problems that might require control. This not only helps protect your trees more effectively, but allows you to get a more frequent look at your trees and to learn more about them.

Have Arbor Day proclaimed by community officials with appropriate ceremonies and have a commemorative tree planting project in your community each year. We celebrate two Arbor Days. Texas Arbor Day is the third Friday in January and National Arbor Day is the last Friday in April.

What Other Considerations Are Important?

How can a tree management program be used to bring special attention, recognition and increased business activity to your community?

How can you develop a tree management program that can compete favorably for local revenue with other community service and protection programs?

What construction projects or other capital improvement programs will affect trees in your community? Are trees being considered in these projects and programs? Are trees part of the design plan? Remember to protect existing trees and plant new ones.

How can you make better use of the brush and wood residues from pruning in your community?

What tree work should be contracted and what could you do yourselves if your employees were properly trained and equipped?

Are you planting the right trees in the right places?

Where Can You Get Assistance?

The Texas Agricultural Extension Service can provide tree management training and educational assistance to towns and cities in Texas. These offices can be found in nearly every Texas county. Contact your county Extension agent for access to urban forestry specialists at Texas A&M University.

The Texas Forest Service has several urban foresters on its staff. They can be located by contacting the nearest Texas Forest Service office.

Several consulting foresters and consulting arborists offer tree management help to communities on a fee basis. They can be contacted directly or through the other sources listed here.

Professional tree service companies and tree experts are vital in helping communities plant, trim, maintain and remove trees. They are usually available on a local basis.

Landscape nurserymen, tree growers, landscape contractors, landscape architects and horticultural experts are available to help communities with planting and landscaping programs.

City foresters and arborists in larger cities are usually willing to discuss tree management problems with other communities. Remember, however, that these professionals have a primary responsibility to the city that employs them. You may have to visit them at their offices.

Nearby cities and towns may have tree management problems similar to yours. Perhaps you can help each other in developing tree management programs.

Contact these people for help in developing your community tree management program. Remember that assistance in developing your community tree management program is available from Extension forestry through your county Extension agent.



Streetside plantings could add to the aesthetics of a new subdivision.

In many areas the design will allow the planting of small trees, but not large shade trees.



Housing in forested areas seldom has space available for additional plantings.



Educational programs conducted by the Texas Agricultural Extension Service serve people of all ages regardless of socio-economic level, race, color, sex, religion or national origin.

Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, The Texas A&M University System and the United States Department of Agriculture cooperating. Distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8, 1914, as amended, and June 30, 1914.

3M — 1-80, Reprint

FOR